

hope of immediate success. Yet he continued through life to preach the Erastian doctrine he had expounded. This implied a breach with the central idea of political science at the time, that Church and State were co-ordinate, and that neither could interfere with the internal affairs of the other. Such interference as there had actually been, was rather that of Church with State than of State with Church. The opposite notion, that ordinances of the King's Council or Acts of Parliament should be ultimate sovereign authorities in spiritual affairs, was blasphemy to a mediaeval churchman. Another belief of his contemporaries to which "Wycliffe did equal violence was that the ecclesiastical organisation should be international. It was no anomaly that a large proportion of holders of benefices in England should be Italians and French, although it had long been an application of logic distasteful to English clergy as well as laymen. Wycliffe's daring proposal in the 'De Officio Regis' was for an English Church governed by the King and co-extensive with the State.

The years 1379 and 1380 passed away without any striking event. They were years of germination, not of action. Wycliffe for a short while ceased to be either the centre of politics or the object of persecution. During two quiet years of retirement at Oxford he thought out in his study, and began to teach in his lecture-room, the denial of the doctrine of Transubstantiation. So was brought into the world the greatest theological controversy that ever divided mankind. During these same two years nothing remarkable occurred in war or politics. As the military and naval power and the finances of England sank steadily year by year, each new Parliament with its remedies marked a stage of decline. Taxation ground down the people, and it seemed as if things might go on so for ever. But underneath, among the ignorant and uneconsidered peasantry of the villages, was spreading the spirit of revolts.

The Parliament which passed the Act modifying the right of Sanctuary for fraudulent debtors, met at Westminster in April 1379. It had important financial business to transact. The Chancellor, Scrope, confessed that the deficit was very